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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006356

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: GOJ PROMISES TO CLAMP DOWN ON RADICAL CLERICS, ACT
ON OTHER PRIORITIES

REF: A. AMMAN 06215

[1](#)B. AMMAN 06213

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (b),(d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez pledged July 22 to take action on unaccomplished goals identified by King Abdullah. In accordance with the King's directive to "improve the living standards of citizens," Fayez promised to hold a national conference on poverty and unemployment in September and announced a national recruitment database to help match job seekers and employers. Fayez further promised to dismantle barriers to investment, streamline public administration, and enhance government accountability. In response to concerns over religious extremism, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs will continue efforts to "guide" clerics in promoting tolerance, while the Ministry of Interior plans to crack down on unlicensed preachers who give sermons that "challenge" the state or "slander" individuals. The degree of public airing of the regime's concerns about extremist Islam within Jordan is unusual, and underscores the seriousness of this threat. End Summary.

HEEDING THE KING'S CALL

[1](#)2. (U) Reacting to a letter from King Abdullah prodding the government to move forward on his priorities (see ref b), PM Fayez issued a public response July 22 pledging to take steps to meet the King's expectations. To implement the King's mandate to "improve the living standards of citizens," Fayez said the government would hold a national conference on poverty and unemployment in September. He also announced the launching of a "national recruitment center" which would use a computerized employment database to help match employers with those seeking jobs. Additional foreign investment will be attracted, according to Fayez, by "restructuring" investment-related institutions and promoting greater transparency in business deals.

[1](#)3. (U) Fayez said that a ministerial committee had been formed to set up a program to implement the King's calls to modernize the public administration system, decentralize authority, and enhance government accountability on the use of public funds. The GOJ plans to conclude a medium-term strategy on administrative reform in September and will conduct a comprehensive internal evaluation in November, Fayez stated. On June 26, the Prime Minister's office announced the establishment of two new bodies: 1) a "Secretariat for the Council of Ministers," which will work to ensure better cooperation between ministries and streamline government decision-making; and 2) a "Monitoring and Evaluation Unit" which will track the government's performance through the preparation of regular reports.

COMBATING EXTREMISM

[1](#)4. (C) Regarding the King's admonition to promote "true Islam," Fayez announced that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs would use its Preaching and Guidance Council to "encourage" mosque preachers to reinforce the ideas of tolerance and dialogue. In a June meeting with PoOff and former Ambassador, Minister of Awqaf Hilayel stressed that his ministry was busy training Muslim preachers in every governorate to help "guide" them in delivering a "proper" message. "We know without practice and preparation they may go off on tangents and make mistakes," Hilayel said.

[1](#)5. (U) In a closely related move, a Ministry of Interior circular distributed June 25 issued instructions to governors to crack down on sermons by unlicensed preachers, particularly those that "challenge" the state and "slander" people. Minister of Interior Habashneh advocated taking legal measures against offenders under applicable legal codes, both criminal and civil.

COMMENT

16. (C) Fayed will have to back his promises with concrete action if he is to avoid another admonishment from the King. A renewed focus on reducing the stubbornly high unemployment rate should appeal strongly to rank and file Jordanians, while steps to prevent incitement in mosques target palace concerns over extremist Islam (see ref b).

HALE